connector 14. Thus, Bucher et al does not teach the feature of "the stop and verification arm (141) extending from the body portion (93 or 95) in one axial direction beyond the stop portion (129), an engagement between the engaging portion (143) and the stop portion (129) being releasable by moving the stop and verification arm (141) so as to lift up one axial end portion thereof radially outwardly". (Last four lines of claims 9 and 12).

In U.S. 5,303,963 (McNaughton et al), clips 56 of the clip extension 57 abut the outer flange 44 of the retainer housing 32 and are received within the outer channel 42 of the housing. Thus, withdrawal of the secondary retainer clip 52 from the housing 32 is prevented or at least severely restricted. In order for the clips 56 to engage the outer flange 44 in a locked relation, the clips 56 must of necessity be located on one axial end with respect to the outer flange 44. That is, and with respect to both McNaughton et al construction and the subject invention, the engaging portion 56 (143) must be located on one axial end with respect to the stop portion 44 (129). However, the object of the invention of claims 9 and 12 is to provide easy release of engagement between the engaging portion (143) and the stop portion (129) when necessary. Thus, the verification arm, as recited in claims 9 and 12, extends "in one axial direction **beyond** the stop portion". This does not mean that the engaging portion (143) is located on one axial end with respect to the stop portion (129) solely for the purpose of providing engagement therebetween. Rather, this feature requires that the stop and verification arm extends in one axial direction beyond the extent required solely for providing engagement, namely, for a distance and length sufficient to facilitate lifting the axial end portion of the arm radially outwardly. In the arrangement of McNaughton et al, on the other hand, the clips 56 are located on one axial end with respect to the outer flange 44 solely for the purpose of providing engagement between the clips and the flange. There is no disclosure or teaching of extending the verification arm from the body portion in that one axial direction beyond the stop portion as recited in claims 9 and 12.

Further in regard to McNaughton et al, the clips 56 are received within the outer channel 42 in a manner whereby an external force would be difficult to act on the clips.

Because of the narrow axial width of the channel 42, it would be difficult or impossible for an operator to manipulate the clips. Furthermore, there is no disclosure whatever in McNaughton et al concerning removal of the retainer clip 52. The present invention, on the other hand, has as one of its objects a provision of easy releasable engagement between the engaging portion (143) and the stop portion (129) when necessary. Release of the engagement between the engaging portion (143) and the stop portion (129) requires the lifting radially outwardly of only a single stop and verification arm (141), whereas McNaughton et al would require the deflection of four clips 56 and the connected extensions 57.

With respect to EP 0 484 690 (Dennany), the inwardly directed portions 16b of the resilient finger portions 16a are received within the annular groove 12a of the housing 12 thereby preventing withdrawal of the redundant clip 16 from the housing 12. The inwardly directed portion for terminating portions 16b are provided with radially inwardly directed arcuate portions 16d which engage the floor portions of the groove 12a in the housing 12. If it is assumed that the annular groove 12a is equivalent to applicants' stop portion (129) which groove is engaged by the inwardly directed portions 16b equivalent to applicants' engaging portion (143), it is apparent from Fig. 4 of Dennany and the associated description that the resilient fingers 16a terminate in radially inwardly directed portions 16b and these radially inwardly directed portions are received within the groove 12a, but do not extend **beyond** the annular groove 12a (equivalent to applicants' stop portion (129)) in one axial direction.

Further, assuming that the stepped surface of the other axial end of the annular groove 12a in Dennany is an equivalent to the stop portion (129) recited in claims 9 and 12 and the inwardly directed portions 16b are located on one axial end with respect to the stepped surface solely for the purpose of providing engagement with the stepped surface of the annular groove 12a, the resilient finger portions 16a are not configured so as to extend in said one axial direction **beyond** the extent required for providing engagement between the stepped surface and the inwardly directed portions 16b.

Further, in Dennany, inwardly directed portions 16b are received within the annular groove of significantly narrow width. If an operator tried to manipulate the inwardly directed portions 16b (or either peripheral portions equivalent to "the one axial end portion" of applicants' stop and verification arm (141)), it would be difficult if not impossible for the operator to manipulate the inwardly directed portions 16b. In the description in Dennany, in column 4, lines 15-17, it is stated that "disconnection tabs 16a of clip 16 are deflected from groove 12a to permit sliding of the clip 16 away from groove 12a." However, there is no disclosure or suggestion whatever as to how the tabs 16a might be deflected from the groove 12a.

Finally, in order to release engagement between the engaging portion (143) and the stop portion (129) in applicants' arrangement, only a single stop and verification arm is required to be lifted. In Dennany, on the other hand, two of the inwardly directed portions 16b and resilient finger portions 16c would have to be deflected.

For the foregoing reasons, new claims 9 and 12 are believed to be clearly distinguished over the teachings of Bucher, McNaughton and Dennany, either individually or in combination, and are therefore allowable.

Respectfully submitted,

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